

1. (Amended) A fastener for coupling together two or more items, said fastener comprising:

(a) a connector having a first end and a second end,

a₁ (b) a first cross-member formed onto the first end of said connector, said first cross-member comprising a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface, the first end of said connector being formed onto the flat inner surface of said first cross-member, and

(c) a second cross-member formed onto the second end of said connector.

12. (Amended) A needle well-suited for use in dispensing a plastic fastener of the type comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof, said needle comprising:

a₂ (a) a substantially flat bottom wall, and

(b) a pair of spaced apart sidewalls which extend generally orthogonally up from said flat bottom wall,

(c) wherein said needle is shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore which is adapted to receive the cross-member of the plastic fastener, said bore being generally rectangular in lateral cross-section, the bore having a transverse cross-sectional height and a transverse cross-sectional width, the transverse cross-sectional width being greater than the transverse cross-sectional height.

a₃ 14. (Amended) The needle as claimed in claim 13 wherein one flange is formed onto and extends orthogonally inward from the free end of each of said pair of sidewalls.

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16. (Amended) The needle as claimed in claim 12 wherein said needle is shaped to define a longitudinally-extending slot which is adapted to receive the connector of the plastic fastener.

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18. (Amended) A combination of a fastener and a needle, said fastener comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof and a second cross-member at a second end thereof, each of the first and second cross-members being in the form of a thin disk which includes an inner surface and an outer surface, the first end of said connector being formed onto the inner surface of the first cross-member and the second end of said connector being formed onto the inner surface of the second cross-member, said needle terminating in a tip at a front end thereof and being shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore and a longitudinally-extending slot, said longitudinally-extending bore being dimensioned to receive one of said first and second cross-members, said longitudinally-extending slot being dimensioned to permit said connector to extend therethrough while said one of said first and second cross-members is disposed within said longitudinally-extending bore.